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Reward Money Offered for Information Leading to Arrest of Two Fugitives Charged in Multi-Million-Dollar International Cyber Fraud Scheme

Earlier today, the U.S. State Department's Transnational Organized Crime Rewards Program announced the offering of rewards for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of Romanian fugitive Nicolae Popescu,¹ the leader of an international organized crime syndicate that ran a multimillion dollar cyber fraud scheme, and Dumitru Daniel Bosogioiu,² another Romanian fugitive charged with participating in the scheme. Up to \$1 million is being offered for information on Popescu and up to \$750,000 for information on Bosogioiu. Interpol has previously issued Red Notices to foreign law enforcement partners seeking assistance in the apprehension of these fugitives, and the FBI has also released "Wanted" posters to facilitate their arrests. Today, the FBI also announced the addition of Nicolae Popescu to the FBI's Most Wanted Cyber Fugitive List (www.fbi.gov/wanted/cyber).

Defendants Nicolae Popescu and Dumitru Daniel Bosogioiu were originally charged in a criminal complaint with 11 other defendants for their participation in a cyber fraud conspiracy that targeted primarily American consumers on such U.S.-based websites as Cars.com and AutoTrader.com. The charges were brought by the office of Loretta E. Lynch, United States

Attorney for the Eastern District of New York. Six of the defendants were arrested in a coordinated international takedown on December 5, 2012, and two other defendants subsequently voluntarily surrendered to the United States to face prosecution,³ but Popescu, Bosogioiu and others have remained at large.

As alleged in the complaint and subsequent indictment, the defendants participated in a long-term conspiracy to saturate Internet marketplace websites including eBay, Cars.com, AutoTrader.com, and CycleTrader.com with detailed advertisements for cars, motorcycles, boats, and other high-value items – generally priced in the \$10,000 to \$45,000 range – that did not actually exist. The defendants employed co-conspirators who corresponded with the victim buyers by email, sending fraudulent certificates of title and other information designed to lure the victims into parting with their money. The defendants also pretended to sell cars from nonexistent auto dealerships in the United States and created phony websites for these fictitious dealerships. As part of the scheme, the defendants produced and used high-quality fake passports to be used as identification by co-conspirators in the United States to open American bank accounts. After the "sellers" reached an agreement with the victim buyers, they would often email them invoices purporting to be from Amazon Payments, PayPal, or other online payment services, with instructions to transfer the money to the American bank accounts used by the defendants. The defendants and their co-conspirators allegedly used counterfeit service marks in designing the invoices so that they would appear identical to communications from legitimate payment services. The illicit proceeds were then withdrawn from the U.S. bank accounts and sent to the defendants in Europe by wire transfer and other methods.

The complaint and indictment describe the extent to which Popescu, in particular, led the conspiracy. Among other things, Popescu coordinated the roles of the various participants in the scheme – he hired and fired passport makers based on the quality of the fake passports they produced, supervised co-conspirators who were responsible for placing the fraudulent ads and corresponding with the victims, and ensured that the illicit proceeds transferred to the U.S. bank accounts were quickly collected and transferred to himself and others acting on his behalf in Europe. It is estimated that the defendants and their co-conspirators earned over \$3 million from the fraudulent scheme.

According to the charging documents, Popescu and his close associate Bosogioiu demonstrated they were aware of the risks of prosecution in the United States. In a recorded conversation on October 23, 2011, Bosogioiu vowed to avoid the FBI. Popescu, meanwhile, predicted on July 28, 2011, "criminals will not be extradited from Romania to U.S.A. . . . [I]t will never happen."

"As alleged, Popescu and his close associate Bosogioiu engaged in a pattern of pervasive criminal conduct, victimizing hard-working American consumers looking to purchase cars. They believed international borders would allow them to act with impunity. They were wrong. By now, Popescu and Bosogioiu have seen their co-conspirators brought here to account for their crimes. Today's reward offered by the State Department makes clear that we are determined in our efforts to find these fugitives, no matter where they hide, and bring them to justice for the crimes they have committed against our citizens," said United States Attorney Lynch. Ms. Lynch expressed her thanks to the U.S. State Department's Transnational Organized Crime Rewards Program, under which the rewards are being offered.

FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Venizelos said, "transnational organized crime is rooted in violence and corruption, undermines the integrity of our financial markets and puts the security of our nation at risk. As alleged, while hiding behind international borders, Popescu and Bosogioiu engaged in a systematic cyber fraud scheme targeting primarily American consumers through U.S.-based websites. Working in tandem, they jeopardized the personal security of online users who routinely conducted legitimate business on the internet. The sizeable reward money offered by the Department of State underscores the seriousness of these crimes and our joint commitment to putting these individuals behind bars where they can no longer target innocent victims. This case should serve as a reminder to those who camouflage their criminal acts behind the keyboard while preying upon unsuspecting consumers: we will continue to work with our domestic and international law enforcement partners to disrupt and dismantle criminal enterprises that pose a threat to our citizenry."

The charges in the complaint and the indictment are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The State Department's Transnational Organized Crime Rewards Program is responsible for offering rewards leading to the arrest and/or conviction of Popescu and Bosogioiu. More information about Popescu and Bosogioiu is available on the Transnational Organized Crime Rewards Program website at www.state.gov/tocrewards. Anyone with information on these individuals should contact the FBI via the Major Case Contact Center at 1-800-CALLFBI (225-5324), contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, or submit a tip online at www.tips.gov. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

The offices of the FBI Legal Attachés in Romania, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Hungary were instrumental in coordinating efforts with the United States' international partners, and the U.S. government thanks those partners in Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany for their close cooperation throughout this investigation. The Criminal Division's Computer Crimes and Intellectual Property Section, Office of International Affairs and Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering Section, as well as the International Organized Crime Intelligence and Operations Center, Internet Crime Complaint Center, Costa Mesa, Calif., Police Department, Orange County, Calif., District Attorney's Office, and the New York City Police Department, also provided assistance in the investigation.

The government's case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Nadia Shihata, Melody Wells and Claire Kedeshian of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York.

¹ Popescu is also known as "Nae," "Nicolae Petrache" and "Nicolae Stoichitioiu."

² Bosogioiu is also known as "Dmitru Bosogioiu," "Dimitru Bosogioiu," "Dmitru Busogioiu" and "Ioghi."

³ Of these eight defendants, four have been convicted, three are engaged in criminal proceedings in the United States and one remains engaged in extradition proceedings in Canada.

FBI wanted posters:

- [Nicolae Popescu](#)
- [Dumitru Daniel Bosogioiu](#)

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